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Disney reveals Roger Rabbit's Toon plans

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BATMAN

Secrets exposed!

From utility belt to the Batmobile!

SPECTACULAR BATMOBILE FOLD-OUT

Adam West: Still Batman after all these years???

Marvel Movies: Stan Lee previews the possibilities

TALES
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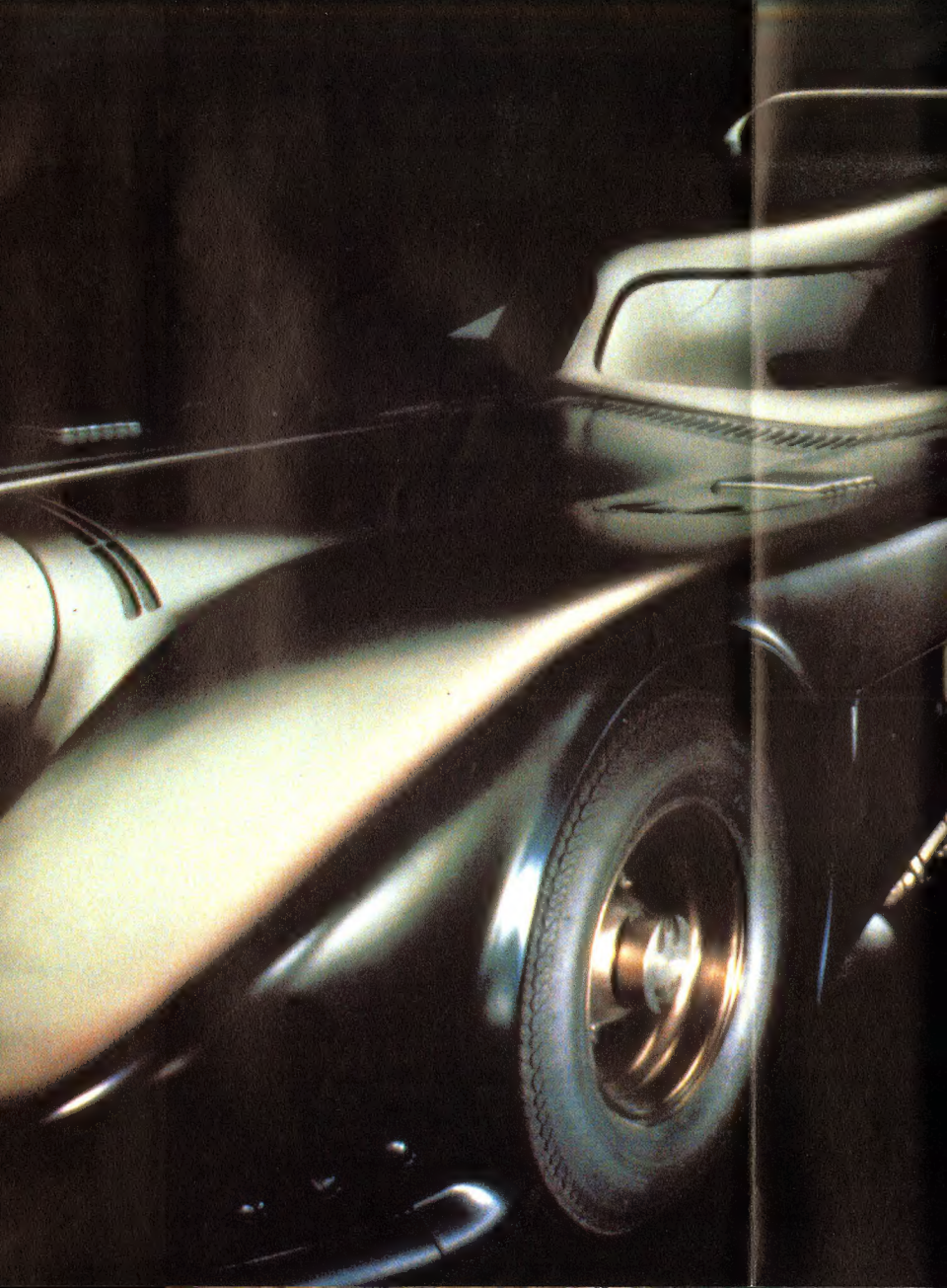

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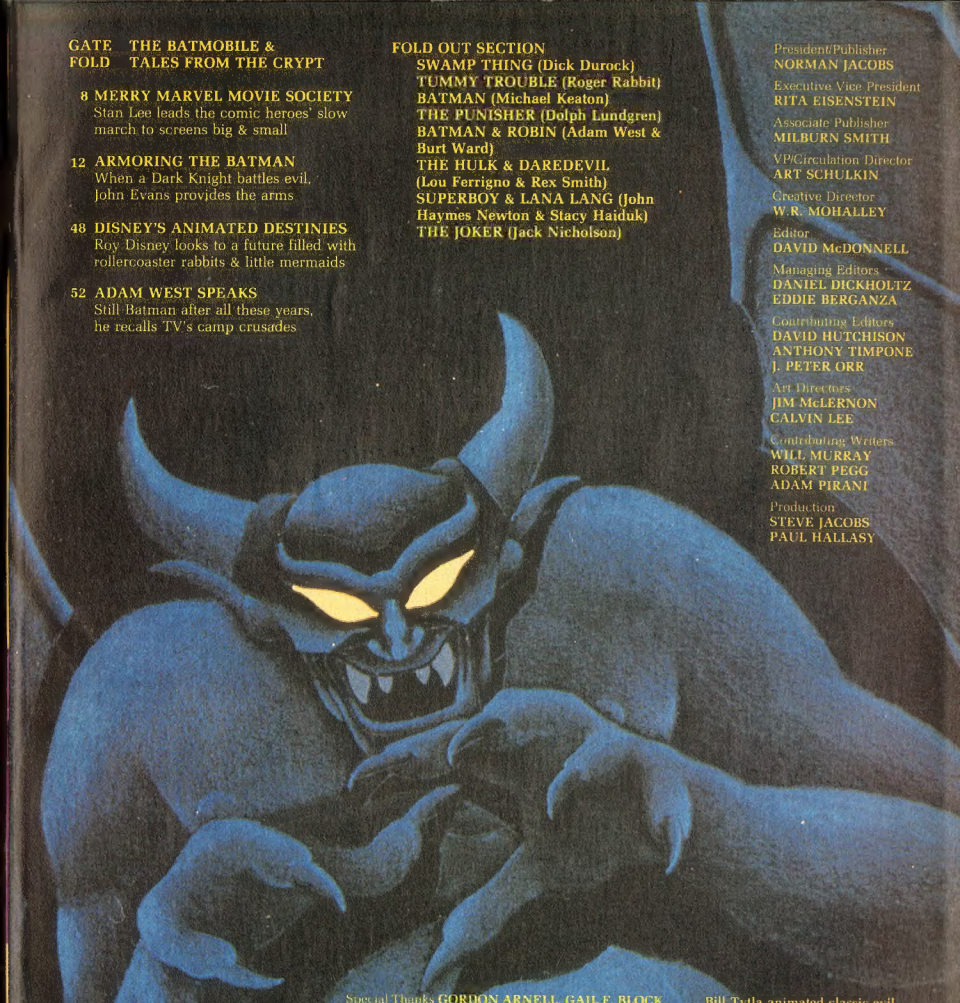

Special Thanks GORDON ARNELL, GAIL F. BLOCK, ROY E. DISNEY, MARCY ENGELMAN, JOHN EVANS, TRICIA FISHER, HOWARD GREEN, FRED GREENBERG, STAN LEE, MARA MIKIALIAN, JOHN MURPHY, VICKI ROSE, BUD ROSENTHAL, STEVE SAFFEL, WALLACE SEARS, HALI SIMON, JEFF WALKER, ADAM WEST, ROBIN ZARENSKY

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Bill Tytla animated classic evil in *Fantasia*. Roy E. Disney would love to create a follow-up (see page 48).

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MARVEL &

From now on, Stan Lee will be

By WILL MURRAY

With the rapid series of events that recently overtook Marvel Comics Group, starting with their purchase from parent company New World Entertainment last December by Revlon Chairman Ron Perelman, to the astounding occasion of Perelman purchasing New World itself in April, one wonders where that leaves the man who led Marvel to its first success, Stan Lee. For the last 10 years, Lee has been living in Southern California, overseeing Marvel Productions. And now?

"I'm still the publisher of Marvel Comics," Lee notes, "which is mostly an honorary title, because I don't get much time to do *any* publishing. I spend most of my time out on the West Coast, working on the movies and on our TV projects. My title, which sounds incredibly impressive but means very little, is the creative head of the company."

In the past, Marvel's allegiance to New World has made it necessary that most of their film projects be developed with the studio, which has sometimes led to problems. When New World first bought Marvel, they discovered its most famous character, Spider-Man, was under option to Cannon Films. The days of New World having veto power over Marvel movie projects are over, according to Lee.

"I've been given more responsibility and, more importantly, more authority," Lee reveals. "In the past, we sold the rights to producers to do our movies. And when they bought those rights, they could do them any way they wanted. As a consultant, I could advise them, but they didn't have to listen to me, and they usually didn't! Now, I'm no longer a consultant. On almost every movie we do, I'll be the co-executive producer, which means they *have* to listen to me. It also means I won't have any excuse if the movie is no good."

Release of *The Punisher*, the latest Marvel movie made before Lee's new authority, has been delayed by New World's sale. "It involves a mob of Japanese outlaws and a mob of Italian outlaws who fight each other," says Lee. "There is almost no nationality that won't be somewhat offended by this film."

Dolph (*Masters of the Universe*) Lundgren plays the Punisher. "Unfortunately or maybe fortunately," Lee says, "they took the skull off the Punisher's shirt front. They said it looked too comic booky, which was rather a surprise to me because I assumed they bought the character because he was a comic book hit. But who knows the ways of movie producers?"

The first movie project to see Stan Lee as co-executive producer will probably be the 21st Century Productions film version of *Captain America* to be directed by Albert Pyun. Fans may remember that Pyun had been scheduled to direct the on-again, off-again Cannon Films version of *Spider-Man* (CS#2).

"*Spider-Man* is a *mess*," Lee explains. "They've been trying to do a Spider-Man movie for six or seven years now. First, Roger Corman was going to do it. Then, one or two other outfits. Then, Menahem Golan, who was at that time the head of Cannon Films, was going to do it. The scripts have all been *terrible*. They must have done 10 scripts and each one was worse than the last. Finally, I had Golan to the point where he said, 'I give up, Stan. You go ahead and get me a script.' So, I've got a few writers I want to try. I think finally we'll get a good story. It will be a Spider-Man story. He's very anxious to produce it."

"I'll be the co-executive producer, they *have* to listen to me," says Stan Lee. "It also means I won't have *any* excuse if the movie is no good."

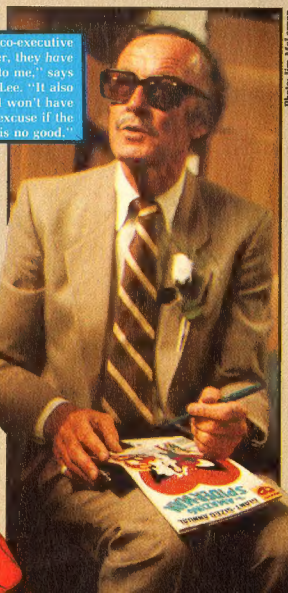


Photo: Jim McLernon

Spider-Man Photo: CBS

THE MOVIES

personally seeing their heroes to the screen.

While a script is being prepared, Pyun has jumped over to the *Captain America* project at 21st Century (the company headed by Golan now that he has left Cannon; 21st Century apparently will now also do the *Spider-Man* movie). For this version, the star-spangled avenger's 1964 revival will serve as the springboard, but without the cast of characters—Sub-Mariner, Giant-Man, the Wasp, Iron Man and Thor—who were very instrumental in his revival in *Avengers #4*.

"Cap thinks we're *still* at war with Germany," Lee says of the premise, which also involves the Red Skull. "Before he did his Rip Van Winkle, he was fighting the Nazis. He thinks World War II is still going on. It's like these things you read about: 'Japanese soldier found on an island who still thinks he's fighting America.' "

Casting has been narrowed down to five unknown actors—not all of them blonde—and a script by Steve Tolkin has been completed.

Captain America is expected to go to camera later this year. But on the horizon is a film that Lee says may be the biggest superhero epic ever shot, Neue Constantin's production of *The Fantastic Four*.

"The producer, Bern Eichinger, has had three other movies that he had to do first," Lee says. "He's the producer of *The Neverending Story*, *The Name of the Rose* and *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. He's going to do *The Fantastic Four* now. He has some writers working in Germany. He wants to do the Fantastic Four stories where they first meet the Silver Surfer and Galactus. It's a little scary to think of it."

The Hulk (Lou Ferrigno), whose specials have made a strong showing in the ratings, will continue to usher Marvel heroes onto TV.

Meanwhile, one of Marvel's other top superhero teams, has taken an abrupt turn into television.

"I went over to ABC and talked them into doing a primetime animated X-Men show," Lee reveals. "It's a one-hour show. It *may* be cut to a half-hour. It'll be the first time that a superhero character in animation will be on primetime. We're all excited about that."

The new show won't be a sequel to the recent X-Men pilot now on videotape. Lee admits that the first pilot, done in conjunction with a toy company, had its share of shortcomings.

"They were about to make X-Men toys," Lee recalls, "and they said, 'Look, we want you to put every character that we're doing as toy models in the show.' Well, they were making 20 toys! And here the show was 20 minutes long. So, we had to introduce them and explain who they were. These are characters who are *not* very easy to explain to a casual audience. *And* we still had to get in a storyline. Luckily, the animation was very good. Despite the fact that it was the fastest moving thing in the world, with about 10 seconds devoted to each character, people seemed to like it. Now, we'll have a chance to do one the right way in primetime, and this could lead to who knows what? Howard the Duck may be next!" Lee adds impishly.

But with the possibility of an X-Men animated TV series to follow the special, where does this leave plans for a live-action X-Men movie?

"The problem seems to be—even more than in the case of the Fantastic Four—how do you do a live-action *X-Men* for less than $100 million? All those characters, and any one of them is impossible to do. So finally, I decided, why don't we do a movie about just *one* of them, the most popular character? That, of course, is Wolverine. Let's do Wolverine *before* he joined the X-Men. And we'll end the movie where he joins them. In the sequel—*of course*, there will be one—we'll see what happens to the rest of the team."

Frank Castle has met his match—Hollywood politics. The Dolph Lundgren vehicle, which promises something for everyone, was handicapped by New World's sale.

She-Hulk Art: John Byrne

Marvel's other big TV project is the new series of TV movies using the Hulk as a pilot-springboard for other Marvel characters. Two have already aired. The first, guest-starring the Mighty Thor, disappointed comics and TV audiences alike.

"You can imagine how thrilled we in the Bullpen were with Thor's depiction," Lee says ruefully. "It's not something that we want to brag about. Marvel had *nothing* to do with the way it was done. But it proved that virtue wins out and truth and justice triumph, because while the show was very popular and got a good rating, nobody liked Thor and he will *not* be back. One of these days, we *are* going to do a feature film based on Thor, it may be in animation because it would cost about $50 million to do it correctly in live action."

The spin-off projects of the *Trial of the Incredible Hulk*, which guest-starred Rex Smith as Daredevil, remain to be seen, but Lee was happier with it.

"With Daredevil," he says, "it was very good except they didn't put little holes in the mask. It looked as if he's wearing a blindfold, which is less than the most intelligent approach you could get, but we're living with that. They promised that if it spins off into a series, they'll let it look more like a normal mask.

"They have a number of other characters that they want to put with the Hulk," Lee continues. "The ones they're considering, believe it or not, are She-Hulk—I wonder who they're going to cast for *that* role—and an original character called the Chameleon, which I created some time ago. He's *not* the same Chameleon who appeared in *Spider-Man*. As his name implies, he's a guy who can disguise himself to look like anybody.

"It's a very funny story," Lee explains. "I had done it as a live-action TV series having nothing to do with Marvel. It was a nice little character, very simple. The network liked it. It would have worked. Then, some idiot at the network said, 'You know, he doesn't have enough super-powers. If this is really a Stan Lee character, we think'—and I swear to you this is what we ended up with—'he should be bitten by a chameleon one night just as lightning is striking.' And now the guy can turn into anybody! I mean, if he wanted to become you, he becomes you, because he was once bitten by that chameleon! I feel silly even telling it, but these guys make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, and this is what they decided to do. Oh, man, it was *terrible*! They made it so foolish that by the time the script was written, *nobody* liked it. So, they didn't do it as a series.

DD Photo: Paul Drinkwater/Copyright 1988 NBC

Silly mask aside, Stan Lee was pleased with the Daredevil (Rex Smith) seen in the *Trial of the Incredible Hulk*. For further Marvel heroes, see the fold-out section.

When New World learned about it, they said, 'Hey, he would be *great* to put with the Hulk.' "

A third Marvel hero currently slated to co-star with the Hulk, Dr. Strange, may instead be spun off into his own series without the formality of pairing him with Dr. Banner's unpleasant alter-ego.

"They want to put Dr. Strange in one *Hulk*," Lee explains, "although I feel they should give him his own show entirely, and we're discussing that at the moment. Dr. Strange is one we really want to take some care with because he's a popular character and it's a hard thing to do. We'll find a way to do it right."

Television projects aside, Lee has been working on several different Marvel big screen projects.

"We just talked to a producer named Steve Waterman," Lee reveals. "He wants to do the *Iron Man* movie. I don't know which Iron Man it will be. Remember the series when Iron Man became an alcoholic? I don't know why, but a number of producers in Hollywood *love* that series. Maybe it's because they all drink a lot! Some of them really want to get the origin. Hollywood is funny. I've talked to so many producers who've said, 'We've got to do the origin of Iron Man because we've got to be true to the comics. We want the readers to feel that they're really gettting Iron Man.' And I said, 'That's great! That's great!' And then they say, 'Of course, we're going to change it.' " Lee chuckles in disbelief, adding, "I don't know. No matter how long I live there, I'm *never* really going to understand them!"

One of Marvel Productions' newest potential projects is a silver screen revival of the Sub-Mariner.

"We have a producer [Earl Owensby] who owns the largest underwater facility in the world," Lee says. "They just filmed *The Abyss* there.

"And there, too, I think we have a great script. It's not exactly what you would expect. It isn't just Prince Namor fighting underwater monsters. He declares war on the surface people single-handedly. He comes up here by himself to conquer the human race. There's a lot of action and drama and fun in it."

Another possibility would be the feature film debut of Stephen Strange's old *Strange Tales* co-star, Nick Fury.

"The two gals who did *Adventures in Babysitting*, Linda Obst and Debra Hill, bought the rights a long time ago to do *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*," Lee explains. "They were going to do it for Paramount, which was all set to produce it. I don't know what happened, but something went wrong. Hill went with Disney and Obst formed her own company. She still has the rights to it and she's going to try to do the movie again. We've got a great script, so I think within the next year or two, we'll be seeing *S.H.I.E.L.D.* on the screen."

Finally, another *Tales to Astonish* alumnus' film may be graduating to production—Ant-Man.

"I had the script written about three years ago," Lee recalls. "It was done for New World, and they were having trouble getting financing to do an expensive movie, so it just laid on the shelf. It's updated. We're just using the idea of a man that size. It really isn't based on Ant-Man. He doesn't wear a costume or anything.

"We have one great scene in the script," he details, "where he has to cross the street. If anybody else has to cross the street, he just waits for the light and goes across. With Ant-Man, how do you get across the street when you're that big? You can't quite make it before the light changes. So, he wonders about that for a minute and then sees a man next to him about to cross. Ant-Man manages to climb up the guy's shoe, ties the shoelace around himself, and he hangs on for dear life while this man crosses the street. Now, it sounds like a very simple scene, but I guarantee it will look incredibly impressive when you see it on the screen."

With his newfound creative clout and Revlon backing him up, Lee expects to jump-start many of the long-planned Marvel movies, especially the oft-postponed *Spider-Man*, shortly.

"Everybody expects *Batman* to be a big hit," Stan Lee observes. "And if it is, every studio is going to be looking for more superheroes, especially if their names end in 'man.' Because you know how Hollywood is—it *has* to be derivative."

The problems inherent in bringing *all* the X-Men to the live-action screen will be cut down to size with *Wolverine: The Movie*

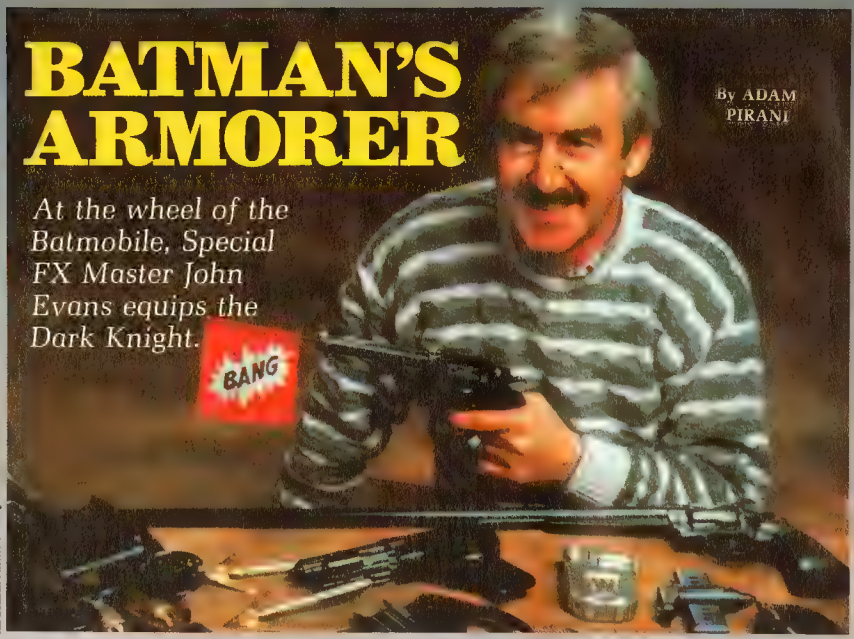
Wolverine Art: John Byrne

All Spider-Man, Hulk, Punisher, Daredevil, Dr. Strange, She-Hulk, Wolverine Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group

BATMAN'S ARMORER

By ADAM PIRANI

At the wheel of the Batmobile, Special FX Master John Evans equips the Dark Knight.



All Batman Photos: Courtesy Warner Bros.

All Batman Photos & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc. Photos: Murray Close

For Batman, it's easy. Just reach down to the Batbelt, grab the gadget you need, pull it out, and *fire!* Or just jump into the Batmobile and *drive.*

For Bruce Wayne, the Caped Crusader's alter-ego, the task is much more difficult. He must design and build all of his trusty devices, alone in the Batcave, in complete secrecy, with only the help of Alfred, his butler.

But for the moviemakers filming *Batman,* the challenge is somewhere in between; it's substantial but not insurmountable. The man assigned the job of outfitting Batman's armory is special FX supervisor John Evans, a veteran of numerous James Bond and Superman movies.

Evans' twin tasks on *Batman* have been to devise the gadgetry and to physically build the Batmobile as well as "many explosions, pyrotechnics and bullet hits."

Most of the gadgets were designed by Evans' FX department based on script requirements. "We had three or four script changes, and each time, the gadgets changed," he notes. "We probably had about 20 or 30 different gadgets that all started off in the first script, and then halfway through, some got deleted or changed." Consequently, not all of the gadgets shown here were seen in the film: like the time bomb and communicator.

Compared to building things for real life, the SFX man's task of creating things for the movie screen is both simpler and more difficult. Simpler because these gadgets don't always have to *work*—they only have to *look* as if they do. (Of course, some gadgets *do* have to work, to be "practical.") But the difficulty of the FX man's efforts is that things have to look *good* in the movies.

The spear gun is handy for making quick exits with photojournalists.

The Joker's gag gun that Evans holds in his hand is a good example. "As he pulls the trigger, the flag pops out, and 'BANG!'—it's just a gag," Evans notes. "The only difficulty with that is getting the flag rolled up properly in the barrel, so it comes out nicely for the camera.

"It was spring-loaded, and we had the flag weighted and [made of] special material, believe it or not. We went through a range of different materials, and some creased up, like silk, so we had to get the right material. A little gag like that, you wouldn't think you had a problem. But on the big screen . . ."

Many of the gadgets are worn on the Dark Knight's utility belt. "We had a harness made with a revolving belt," Evans says, "which actually fit underneath the Batsuit. Then, the artist [actor Michael Keaton] just presses a button and it moves around, and he clips things on and off.

"Batman shoots the barbed hook quite a bit because when he's in trouble, he fires a rope out of it, so this *must* be done practical. When you get miniature items that size, to propel things out of them becomes very difficult."

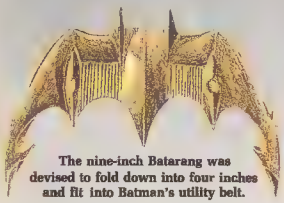
Explains Evans, "We used compressed air a lot, and charges, like gunpowder charges. We have a chamber that you put the compressed air into, 100 pounds per square inch. It's plugged in, filled up, taken out, and it has a non-return valve in, so then you have a chamber full of air, and he just squeezes a trigger."

Once fired, however, this chamber needs to be refilled, which can take at least five minutes. This is the reason for another of moviemaking's demands on the FX man: multiple props. "Obviously, you can't have just *one* of them," Evans says. "You must have two or three. After he does it once, you've got to have another one ready, because they can't hang around for you to charge up.

The Joker (Jack Nicholson) is not one to be outdone by that "winged freak." Here, he brandishes one of *his* little toys.

Batman (Michael Keaton) uses his grappling gun to capture a hood. The props had to work with little or no camera trickery.

"That's always a difficult problem, that once you have one item in the script, the effects man has to make six—all working. Then, you get two or three units filming, all wanting the same thing at the same time, and that's another problem."



The nine-inch Batarang was devised to fold down into four inches and fit into Batman's utility belt.

The Batarang is another gadget fired from Batman's gun. "The Batarang was a gag that folded up into a very small item, four inches by an inch, but had to flick out to a nine inch size," Evans details. Made of steel, it was folded over using "rubber which we call bungee, and it's all folded up, collapsed. As Batman pulls it out of his belt, it flicks up and opens out as a solid one, which looked very good.

"But everything has to be done inside and then sealed. It takes a while, so there again, you must have four or five of them. And then, we had four or five he had to throw with the rope attached. Those we fired with crossbows so we got the speed and a nice feeling of the rope feeding out. We made up a special gadget on a [crossbow] slide so it fits in and fires out."

The reel and line which Batman fires from his pistol-like weapon and then slides along was done in two ways. "We had one that went out, one that came in, and it used small battery-operated motors, so they wound in or they wound out. But it's another complicated thing, three inches by about two-and-a-half inches, and you have to get small motors in there, you've got to get enough rope or wire to stretch 30 feet.

"That was quite a good gadget, because it had to be tight, small, compact and physically work. That's tricky because look at what they use on marine ships, the *size* of things to fire cable.

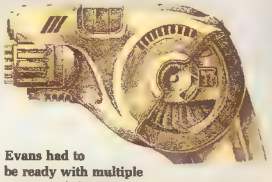
"We made it out of steel—everything was steel—and then compressed air chambers and small charges again, to actually fire the cable out. I'm a great one for compressed air: It's simple, and if things go wrong, you can correct it very quickly.".

However, the darts that also fit into the gun were "never used," Evans reports. "That was another script."

Another attachment, the snub-nosed projectile, was fired from the speargun. "They're the bolas," Evans says. "They use them in Argentina for bringing cattle down, [gauchos] throw them and they wrap around the legs. That was a trick one, because to get it wrapping around somebody—the whip-around—is very difficult. So, it's shot in reverse and we pull it off."

The spiked gauntlet, a major prop seen in the Fluggelheim Museum scene, "had to be practical. These two diamond-shaped barrels flick out, and fire the wire either side, one in that wall and one in the opposite wall," Evans says. "Then, he takes that off, clicks it onto the wire he has just fired and reverses it round and it becomes a trolley.

Says Evans, "That's the danger of special FX, if you get too complicated on any certain subject, you can lead yourself into trouble, because directors tend to change their minds every five minutes, even on the set. They might look at a design you've done and say, 'That's OK,' but when they get onto a particular scene, something changes in their own minds, and they want you to change in five minutes—and they *never* want to know the practical side."



Evans had to be ready with multiple versions of the weaponry when separate units were simultaneously shooting.

The ninja wheels were also made of steel and could be thrown. "Where they had to stick into certain areas, we sent some of them down a wire. Again, we propelled them with compressed air, shot them out of a gun."

For a closer look at the Batmobile, see this issue's triple gatefold behind the front cover. For another view of Michael Keaton as Batman, see fold-out section.

While developing all of the film's different gadgets, Evans was simultaneously building the Batmobile. "Our problem was that the design wasn't finished when we started," he says. "We had a rough outline, and we had to start because we only had 10 weeks to have it built, road-tested and sprayed."

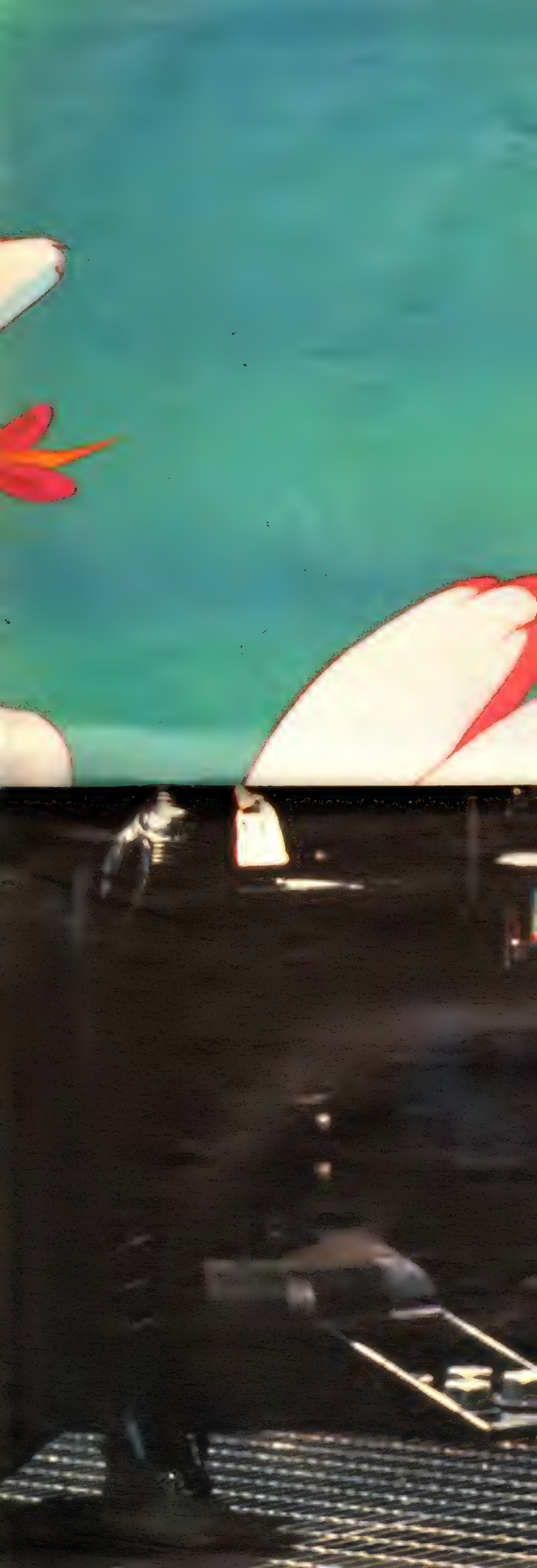
Evans worked from a polystyrene model designed by production designer Anton Furst (COMICS SCENE #7). Because of the time, we went for a Chevrolet Impala, because the chassis had been proven and we didn't have time to actually make and prove our own chassis, take it out and test it," Evans relates.

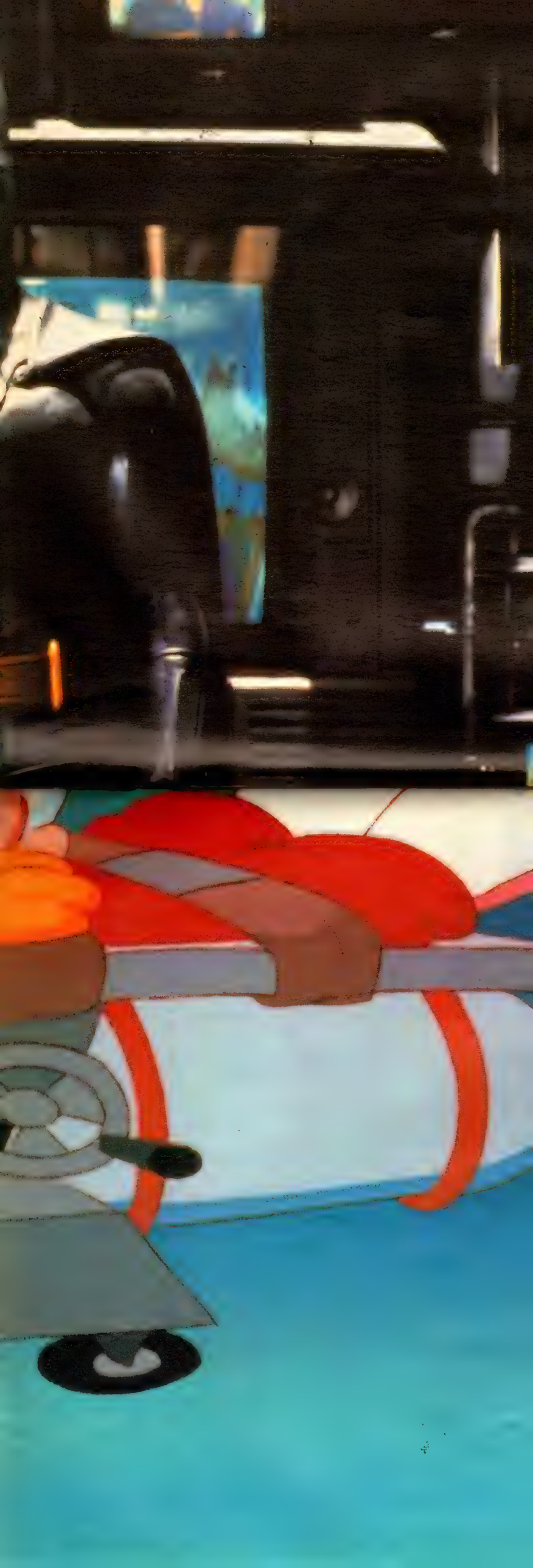
"We went out, bought two scrap Chevrolets and then we went to work on them: stripped them down, stripped the engines down, lengthened the body by two feet, packed out the wheels."

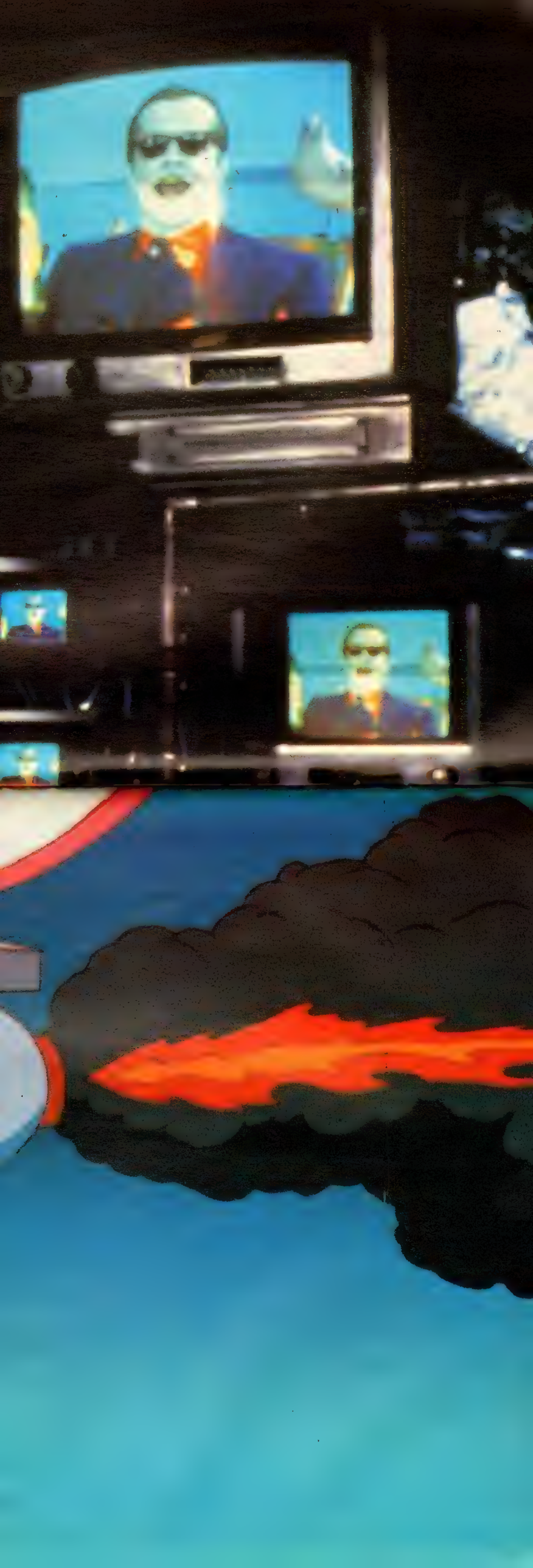
But, he reveals, "we had problems with the engine: We went for a V8 engine, but it was 12 inches too high to fit in his design. So, we had to drop the suspension back 12 inches, and lengthen the chassis.

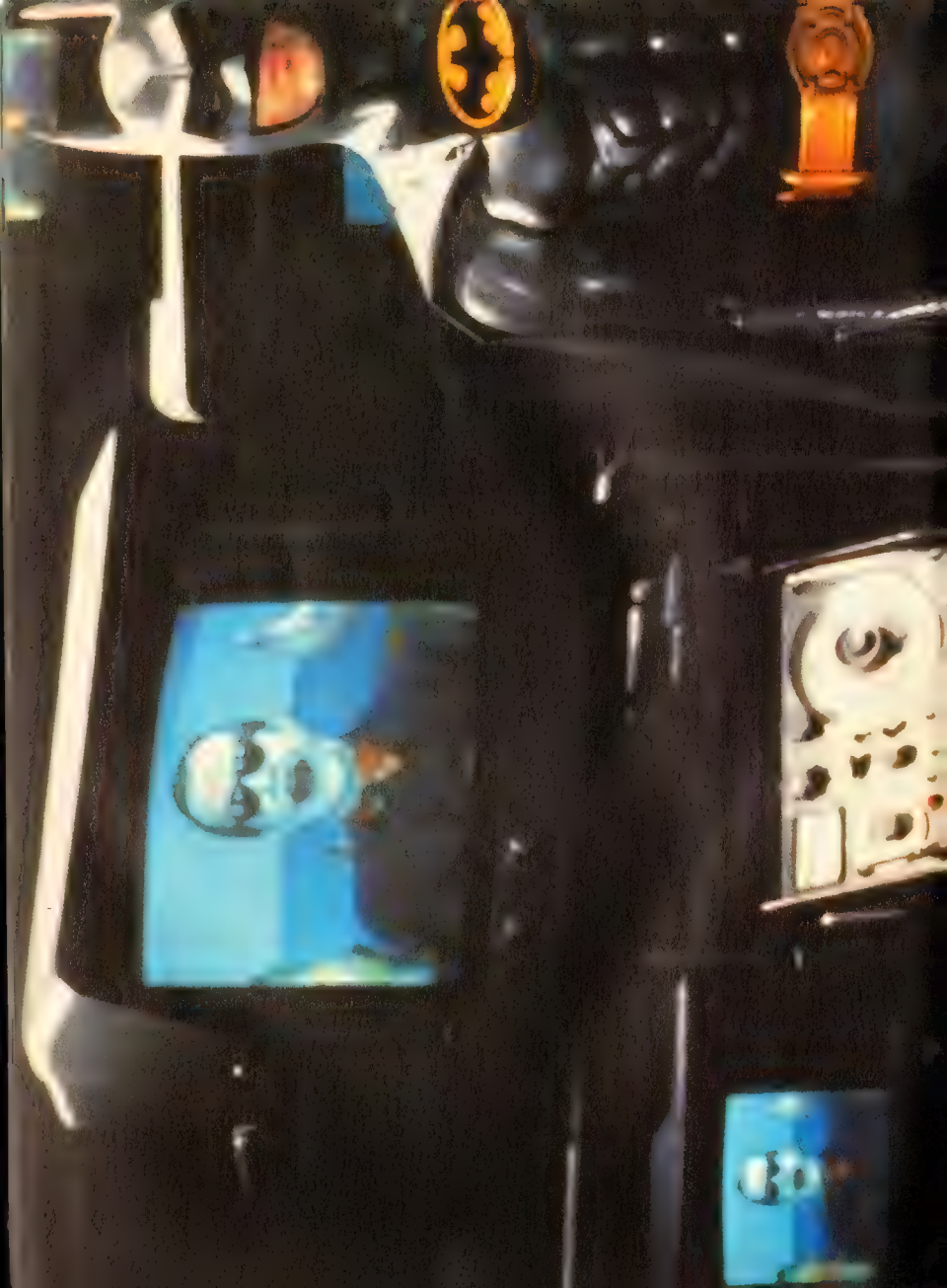
"And then, we had all the gadgets to fit in. We had a barbed hook which fires out of the Batmobile." This figured in the sequence where the Batmobile is being chased down a street, and Batman suddenly fires the hook and line, pulling the Batmobile to the left while his pursuers drive past.

"We actually fired it out of the Batmobile, then we did a cut, but it works, and on the film, it's a marvelous gag," Evans says. "It looks so realistic, you would think that the wire is doing it.









The Batmobile has a jet turbine engine with a thrust of 1500 lbs. @ 103% ROS and a torque of 1750 lbs./ft @ 98.7% ROS. It's able to go from 0 to 60 mph in 3.7 seconds as clocked by the on-board computer. Its weapons system includes retractable protective armor. The car travels on high octane 97% special and thus requires an excellent brake rating, but it's only available in black.

"Then, we obviously had to have the big flame effect out of the back of the Batmobile, which has to be fierce. You can't just have flame. That's a tricky one to get, so we had a nice propane jet there. It was a mixture of propane and air, and then pressures.

"That was fitted in the car plus the machine guns and all the other gadgets, so we were tight for space in the end. But once we had the chassis and the body built, they then decided to design the inside of the Batmobile differently, so we were caught for space."

Two fully working Batmobiles were built. Additionally, "we had one which changes into an armored vehicle," Evans notes. "When it gets shot at, all the shutters come up around the screens. We had that sculpted in polystyrene and part of the glass over. That was full size."

A major test for the Batmobile was the escape from the chemical works. "It went through *flames*. We did the outside shot of the chemical works at a small village in Cambridge. Once it starts blowing up, they felt that they should do it live. So, we had to drive through flames that were 100 feet high that you couldn't get within 50 feet of.

"We had three tankers, with 13 tons each of liquid propane gas pumping into this chemical works, and the Batmobile going through it. We shot it three times and it came through with flying colors, not a scratch on it."

On that occasion, the Batmobile was driven by a stuntman, but Evans notes that "one of my boys drove it in some of the other stunts. Where the timing had to be right for our sake—other gadgets going off, so we have to keep it at a certain speed, hit certain marks at a certain time—it has to be spot on.

"So, one of my lads actually did most of the driving. No disrespect for the stuntmen, but they do tend to put their foot down."

After filming was finished, Evans was curious to see just how far the machine he had built could be pushed. "We actually got 90 m.p.h. out of one on a government test track, and the body started shaking," he says. "Very good, for the time we had. We just took it out to see what we could get. In the film, we had to have it up in the 50s and 60s."

Of *Batman*, John Evans now recalls, "Trying to build two cars in that time, plus the gadgets, and trying to prepare in front of a director and a second unit director who shot very fast—it was all problems. But luckily enough, I've got a good team around me—we've been together now five or six years—which is essential nowadays.

"Time and money, that's the biggest nightmare of a special FX man," he admits. "You have to keep within a budget and the time."

Animated FUTURE

In a brave new Wonderland, Roy E. Disney leads another generation of fantasy artists.

There's no mistaking the family resemblance. For Roy E. Disney, anonymity is impossible—even in a crowded room full of people. Roy E. is the son of Roy O. Disney, brother of Walter E. Disney with whom Roy O. was partnered in the animation business since the earliest days of The Disney Brothers Studio in Kansas City shortly after World War I. Now, tanned and athletically trim, Roy E. Disney has been in charge of the studio's world-famous animation department for the past four years.

In the 1950s and '60s, he worked as a director of live-action animal adventure films for the weekly Disney TV show. Expressing dissatisfaction with the studio's management after Walt's death, he broke with the studio until Frank Wells and Michael Eisner became the new company bosses. Eisner had plenty of experience in TV and film production, but animation is completely unlike any kind of filmmaking. "I decided to take over the reins of the animation department because I grew up with those guys," says Roy E. Disney. "I had the feeling that even if I didn't understand what they did, I understood the kind of people they were. And they all knew me, so I could deal with them on that basis."

Disney believes that the turning point for the animation department was the release of *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986). "I remember when that film came out, saying that we were going to have to bar the doors, and sure enough—many of the old guys who had gone off somewhere else began calling up and saying, 'Hey! I see you're back in the animation business.' That was really good for us. We can be very, very selective at this point about *who* we hire.

Photo: Copyright 1988 The Walt Disney Company

Roy Disney recently announced a new banner, "Funny Flickers," which will premiere a full-length animated *Duck Tales* feature this Christmas; but picking up where his Uncle Walt left off on *Fantasia* is his pet project.

"The animation department is now scattered into four buildings with partial staffs in Burbank, Glendale and North Hollywood. There's a long-term plan to build a new building for animation back on the lot, but I suspect that's still four or five years down the line. We've got this new administration building (next to the Roy O. Disney Building) that will be springing out of the ground soon, so that's our number one priority in terms of office space."

At the moment, most of the Disney Company administration is housed on the lot in what once was the animation building. The story goes that its spacious hallways, multiple wings and extra wide doors were built as "insurance." If the studio folded, Roy O. Disney reasoned, the building could be sold to and used by the hospital across the street.

No such provision has been made for the animation department in the new Florida studio, however. There, the animation department is firmly entrenched as one of the star stops at the new Disney/MGM Studio Tour. "We took a poll at the Burbank Studio last year and found about 15 people spread all over the department who said that they would like to come down to Florida—perhaps not to stay there the rest of their lives, but at least come down for awhile. I think Florida will be very important to us from a training standpoint. Largely though, we will be staffed with new people, probably from east of the Mississippi. We'll be working with several schools or pull people who have been animating commercials in the East."

Disney Animation Florida is led by Max Howard, the animation administrator for *Roger Rabbit*'s London unit, and directing animator Burny Mattinson, whose credits include *Mickey's Christmas Carol* and *The Great Mouse Detective*. The new studio will follow the Disney tradition of quality animation, turning out 24-minute featurette films starring Mickey Mouse and the rest of the Disney gang. Classic stories like "The Emperor's New Clothes" and more contemporary ones like "Mickey's Arabian Adventure" are already in development.

The new Florida animation facility is part of the studio tour. Guests will take a self-guided tour through elevated, soundproofed corridors to watch the animation process first-hand. They'll see Mickey's animated future being made months—or even years—before it arrives on the silver screen.

Aside from increasing the artistic staffs to meet the demands of having several animated features in various stages of production simultaneously, Roy Disney reveals that the studio is continuing to pursue technical innovation just as his famous uncle and Ub Iwerks did a generation ago.

"We're working on a computer-assisted post-production system—inking, painting and camera. It's still in the early stages of development, but the hope is that we'll be able to look at a scene in color to see how it's coming together. It's *very* difficult to judge how a scene is working when all you have is a pencil test that consists of five or more layers of animation laid on top of each other.

"During *Roger Rabbit* dailies, there was a scene in which Eddie Valiant looks down on to the street below Maroon's office: A truck opens up and all these little characters come bursting out to intermingle with the live characters. In rough [pencil test], it's just impossible to tell what you're looking at. You can run it on a loop forever and *still* not figure it out. Only another animator would be able to interpret it.

"With a computer-assisted post-production system, we would be able to see something approaching finished dailies. Being able to preview an animator's work in color and make decisions about color and line *before* we commit to ink, paint and camera is really going to be terrific for us. It's an enormous expense to cut animation that has been inked, painted and sent to camera. We did a fair amount of that on *Roger Rabbit* with great pain. The pig head sequence, for example—it just wasn't working all that well. But, hey, we cut the soup eating sequence out of *Snow White*, too," laughs Disney.

"Ultimately, the system would be developed to complete the process, eliminating not only hand inking and cel painting, but camera as well. An animator's drawing would be digitized, colored, electronically composited to background and transferred to film for release. The system will eventually take the place of the whole post-production department.

"Farther up the artistic ladder, computer-assisted animation for special effects and backgrounds is becoming much more commonplace. Beginning with *The Black Cauldron* and *The Great Mouse Detective*, computer-assisted im-

Fantasia Art: Copyright 1989 The Walt Disney Company

Beautifully detailed and painstakingly crafted background paintings have been a Disney Studio hallmark since *Snow White*.

Roger gets into "Tummy Trouble" in the new cartoon. For another Toontown view, see the fold-out section.

All Little Mermaid Photos: Copyright 1989 The Walt Disney Company

Animator Mark "Loose But Careful" Henn is at his desk, working with the delightful Ariel, voice by Jodi Benson, star of *The Little Mermaid*.

agery had its most extensive use to date in *Oliver & Company* with about 11 minutes of such scenes. A shot or two in *Little Mermaid*, which will be released in the fall, required computer assist. Also, a vehicle called the Bushwacker was digitized for *The Rescuers Down Under*, which is due out next year."

In one sense, computer-assisted imagery and animated backgrounds are a hi-tech replacement for the multi-plane camera of the 1930s. Disney states that those cameras are so cumbersome and expensive that they haven't really been used for much except as part of the studio tour for the past 25 or 30 years. However, one of the old dinosaurs was recently dusted off for an underwater sequence in *Little Mermaid*.

"The reason for *Oliver*'s extensive use of computer animation is the nature of the film. We were able to obtain a database from Skidmore, Owings & Merrill for parts of New York City itself. Then, we digitized street traffic and certain vehicles like Fagin's tricycle and Sykes' car. The computer not only allowed us to fill the streets of Manhattan with vehicles, but it let the camera roam realistically through the landscape. There was an aerial shot of the Brooklyn Bridge, for example, that the computer allowed us to move around and through. And a number of wild shots that just would not be possible. One shot comes out of a subway, the camera travels up and around and winds up looking at the whole Brooklyn Bridge. Yet, you're still seeing your subway train going along. It's a pretty awesome shot. And you can do these things now without thinking of the incredible cost. It avoids the cumbersome expense of the multi-plane camera and it's much more flexible. Suddenly, the cartoon world has *real* depth; characters aren't limited to posing against flat backgrounds and moving from side to side."

The Disney studio is moving much more slowly into full computer animation for characters. Not long after the flashy

otherworld computer graphics in *TRON*, Disney began pursuing a possible computer-animated feature. Based on the Thomas Disch short story, *The Brave Little Toaster* would have featured fully rendered computer character animation. A less adventurous administration passed on the project, which was ultimately animated using traditional methods by an independent company.

"Oilspot and Lipstick," however, is a fully computer-animated three-and-a-half minute film which debuted two years ago. "We did that as an experiment," says Roy Disney. "We always maintained that the hard part for computer character animation was to create organic shapes that can display the same emotions and personality as traditional animation." This is a problem that's largely being overcome by Disney and Pixar (the former Lucasfilm computer graphics facility), as more and more classically trained animators have taken over what has been the domain of computer programmers. In March, ex-Disney animator John Lasseter collected an Oscar for Best Animated Short; it was the first time that the Academy had given an Oscar to a computer-animated short, Pixar's *Tin Toys*.

"I think we've proved that you can do it, but where we're going now with it, I'm not so sure as yet. Eventually, something will come of it. We decided not to do one this year, but we're all trying to think of something for next year which will blow people's minds."

One of Roy Disney's pet projects has been to pick up where Walt Disney left off with *Fantasia*. "The idea of a second *Fantasia* is still very much alive with me," he explains. "I feel a little like Don Quixote once in a while. It's a scary project, because you don't know where the markets are or how big they are. *Fantasia* validated animation as an art form, it was something that went way beyond the animated cartoon, artistically as well as being a great technological advance.

"So, if I'm going to do another *Fantasia*, I would really like to do it in Circle-Vision, or in a five-screen process like EPCOT's French Pavilion, or Omni-max. At one point, I was saying that maybe it ought to be a festival, where you saw part of it in a Circle-Vision theater and part in an Omni-max theater. And I still think that's a valid idea."

Another possibility is 3-D. A Chip & Dale short, "Working for Peanuts," which was made in color and 3-D back in 1953, is currently playing to thousands in Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom as a curtain raiser to Murray Lerner's *Magic Journeys*—a live-action 3-D film. "I think the future in 3-D for us is with computer animation. Since the computer is working with a fully dimensional database, all the information is there for producing the left and right eye images. The computer improves the look in 3-D by keeping the art from looking like flat cut-outs, which is, of course, what we have with traditional cel animation.

"For the future, we're very confident about our next three years. We go from *Oliver* to *Mermaid* to *Rescuers Down Under* to *Beauty and the Beast*. After that, we have about four different projects which we're juggling. *Beauty and the Beast*, scheduled for 1991 release, has been a production proposal at the studio since the 1940s at least. We're looking at fairy tales in general again—*Hansel and Gretel*, for example."

Other ideas under consideration involve more forays into the combination film. *Roger Rabbit*, which has earned grosses of more than $150 million, has made this difficult format viable again. Recently, author P.L. Travers agreed to the possibility of another film adapting her *Mary Poppins* characters. Another suggestion is a fantasy set in the Disney theme parks. Like Toontown, Disneyland is the home of Mickey, Donald and many others, who would be treated as fully animated characters instead of performers in costumes.

"Most of our ideas for animated features come from stories and writers, but sometimes, the animators will develop something uniquely original. Many of the guys have their own ideas, and if they look good, we say, 'Sure, go ahead. Write us a treatment or a synopsis.' It's amazing how many people in Hollywood have something which they've always wanted to do at Disney. So, we have a tremendous amount of submissions. Both Carol Burnett and Alan Alda have suggested stories."

"Somethin's Cookin' " worked so well at the beginning of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* that new Maroon Cartoons are being produced for release with Disney and Touchstone theatrical features.

All Roger Rabbit Art: Copyright 1989 The Walt Disney Company & Amblin Entertainment, Inc.

Roy Disney is quick to point out that one of the strengths of the studio's very best animated features is that their stories do not "talk down" to children. After all, kids are just as intelligent as adults; they're just younger, probably less jaded and undoubtedly shorter.

"Sometimes," says Disney, "the stories make certain assumptions that an adult is no longer willing to buy. Walt always said that he wasn't making pictures for kids; he was making them for *himself*. And he's not going to insult his own intelligence by 'talking down' to the story.

"Death to a story is: 'Oh, I bet the kiddies will like this,' " Disney believes. Unfortunately, that's almost all audiences see in many "children's" films these days. It's not just limited animation. It's limited storytelling, too. "It's harder to make an intelligent story," Roy Disney explains. "You really have to work at it. As far as quality feature animation in the U.S. goes, Disney is it. We have very high standards and we hope they stay that way."

BATMAN MEMORIES

While there was no room for Robin or Burt Ward, West's one possible chance to return (and die) in *Batman* didn't interest him. For another view of West, see the fold-out.

Adam West is still serious about his long-ago exploits as the Caped Crusader.

By ROBERT PEGG

After scaling the side of a building, TV's Batman and Robin jump through an open window into the Joker's hideout. Finding only his blonde moll, they demand to see the Clown Prince of Crime. "Oh, the Joker's in his office right now. Who may I ask is calling?" The Dynamic Duo exchange puzzled glances and then an incredulous Batman answers the all-too obvious, "Batman and Robin, of course."

Who else would be all dressed up to trail the Joker into Gotham City's underworld? And who else but Adam West would be under that famous cowl?

That was true in the '60s, of course, but now Michael Keaton is Batman in the current movie hit. West's reaction? "I feel devastated," he says.

Identified with the part since the mid-60s, West hasn't worked extensively due to typecasting. He has done countless personal appearances with Burt (Robin) Ward at car shows, colleges and science-fiction conventions, but the movie, to his chagrin, passed him by. "It really is devastating in a sense," West says, "because you work 20 years to keep the show alive and fresh and then they hire the hottest director in the business [Tim Burton] and evidently they've plowed a lot of money into this movie and you would like to see it done right."

For many Batman fans, that means the deadly serious Dark Knight, not the "camp" approach of West's TV series which producer William Dozier once described "as the only situation comedy on the air *without* a laugh track." Still, many other fans loved West's portrayal.

With his droll, deadpan delivery and a physique seemingly-devoid of muscle tone (*Newsweek* called him a "flabby travesty of muscle beach"), West overplayed the part to the hilt.

Central to West's camp approach was making Batman into the squarest hero on TV. In the series' pilot, hot on the trail of the Riddler, Batman casually wanders into a nightclub, turns down a ringside table and takes a place at the bar, explaining to the doorman, "I shouldn't wish to attract attention," and then stolidly orders an orange juice.

"I always thought of Batman as an undercover cop," says West today. "He's sort of an undercover guy who happens to be in a funny costume while trying to be inconspicuous."

In the new film, West is conspicuous by his absence. He says he turned down the chance to cameo as Dr. Thomas Wayne, murdered father of Bruce Wayne and the psychological impetus behind the hero.

But West wanted to play Batman and

All Batman Characters & Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

nothing else. He says the film's producers ignored him, except for the cameo offer. "And I wouldn't do that. It's ridiculous. They only asked me for one reason—to help identify the film, to give it my stamp of approval so my fans will come out.

"I wish them well. I really do. I have no bitterness about it although I'm disappointed, of course, that I couldn't do it again in a new version. If they want to remove me as Batman, fine. I've done it and loved it. I'm doing other things now."

Those other things include his 1986 TV series, *The Last Precinct*, and *Doin' Time on Planet Earth*, an SF comedy film now on video. He continues his frequent personal appearances, sometimes in costume as Batman.

Curiously, West's familiarity with the 50-year-old superhero extends back to childhood. "I was never a lunatic-fringe comic-book freak," he admits. "But I remember reading all those things, I remember Batman very well."

In recent years, the Batman of the comics has taken a turn back to his roots. The character is once again a grim avenger; his most popular stories, dark and Gothic. "Those things are written to open new markets, to sell more comic books naturally," West comments. "That's the bottom line. In an attempt to stay appealing and exciting to the people who are really into comics, they do this. And that's fine, but it just proves to me that the theater of the imagination will allow it, that Batman can be presented in *many* ways, on many different levels and it's acceptable if you do it artfully. I don't think you should tamper with it as far as the violence, the sexuality, the S & M—that's all right in a comic book with a limited readership."

Today's Batman is not the Caped Crusader of West's era, but this grim Dark Knight of the comics. Still, Adam West believes he *could* have played this more contemporary version of Batman, especially with *Beetlejuice*'s Tim Burton as his director.

"That's what I thought," laments West. "I was really excited that they had signed him and thought we could have had a wonderful rapport. He could have been able to bring out a freshness with me if I were to do the picture.

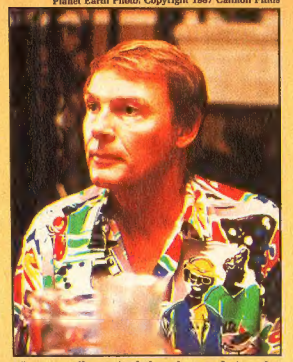
"But anyways, let's get off that because it's their candy store, their ball game. They have the licensing, they can do what they want."

How would West do the Batman film if he had the chance?

"Well, half-a-billion people watch our show every day and they don't want it tampered with or changed," he explains. "But you can still update it. I would do it as a little more serious adventure *but* I would retain the old show's flavor. It would be a hi-tech wondrous kind of mystery adventure and Batman would be fighting crime only at night.

"Things would be *suggested* and *imagined*, you know? You don't have to

Planet Earth Photo: Copyright 1987 Cannon Films



"I was really excited that they had signed Tim Burton and thought we could have had a wonderful rapport," laments Adam West.

show flesh and bones splintering and splattering on walls and you don't really have to show Batman being clawed in bed while making love or Bruce Wayne with bruises on his back in the shower after hopping out of the sack with some chick. You can make it much more adult and romantic without that."

Meanwhile, West's *Batman* continues to battle evildoers in syndication. In the wake of the Burton film, 20th Century Fox TV plans a marketing push which should find the series reruns airing again on many local TV stations.

"There has been so much new product fighting for the marketplace. Like television, there's such a deluge of it. America's going to murder itself with amusement if we're not careful," he notes wryly. "And so, what happens is, everybody's trying for something new and different but really just cloning [other shows] so that you forget the really delightful aspects of the '60s series that were very original—*Batman*, *I Spy*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Green Acres*—shows where they really threw the rules out the window. Those shows might work today. I think people are a little tired of the standard network fare—witness the attrition, the falling away of network viewers mostly due to videos and cable.

"*Batman* was done on two levels, one for adults and the other for the kids. That's what we tried to do, so that as you get older and watch it over and over, you see different things. That's what makes a classic.

"My 10-year-old son, Perrin, and his friends enjoy seeing *Batman* as much as they do anything else. They're all so familiar with me, they don't care, it's just like watching Dad go to work or do another show," says Adam West. "But *Batman*, I think, is just going to go on and on, long after I'm gone."

Jill St. John's "Hi Diddle Riddle" dance partner has been immortalized in song once more by Los Angeles disc jockey Wally Wingert with the cult classic "Adam West."

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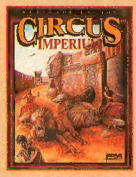

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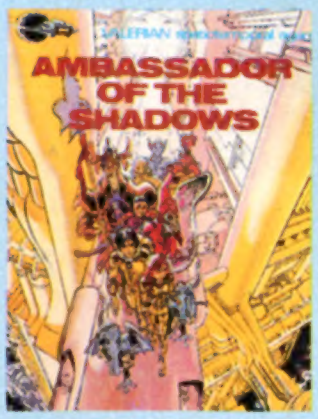

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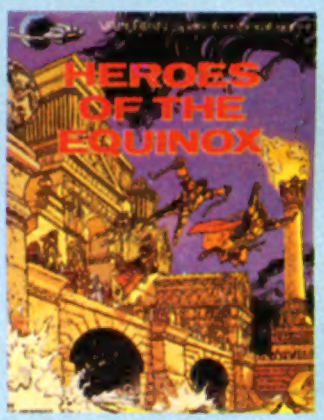

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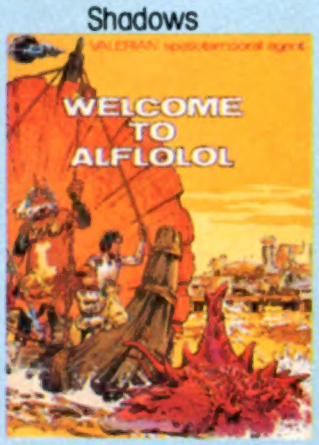

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